

Ephesians

Bible Commentary 2021

by

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Grace and Peace – Ephesians 1

1:1-2

In Ephesians Paul proclaimed the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I see a lot of similarities between Ephesians and Romans. It was more a letter of doctrine than correction.

Ephesians was one of the prison letters. Paul wrote Ephesians when he was a prisoner of Rome. It is hard for me to imagine how a man could write a letter like this while he was chained up but that was what happened. Paul was a prisoner of Rome, but he considered himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ministry can happen anywhere a believer is. As a Christian I can serve the Lord anywhere. No matter what my outward circumstances may be I can still serve the Lord.

Paul was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. This calling was according to God's will for Paul's life. We can read the book of Acts for more of Paul's background. If God can save a man like Paul he can save anybody.

Paul addressed local churches by their geographical location rather than by the name of a man or a doctrine. Today men name churches according to doctrine or the names of men. However, we don't see this in the Bible. Instead, the only division in the church was where a church was located. The point is that churches should not be divided by the names of men or doctrines. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ should not be divided.

Paul extended a greeting of grace and peace. This is both a Gentile and Jewish greeting. Of course, that is exactly what the church is: Jews and Gentiles brought together in the new creation of the Lord Jesus Christ. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation.

God is three in one. Here we have the Father and the Son mentioned in one breath. Jesus Christ is God. God the Father is God. Three persons in one God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1:3

During the time the religious leaders examined the Lord Jesus he asked them a question. Read Mark 12:35-37.

This question pointed us to the fact that Jesus was not only a man but he was also God the Son. We must understand that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus is God the Son. Paul pointed this out when he said, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*". Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Joseph was the adopted father of the Lord Jesus. However, the real father of Jesus is God. Mary was a virgin when she conceived and gave birth to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was according to the promise of the angel which appeared to Mary.

It is important to keep in mind that God is three in one. If we deny this then we deny that God the Father is God or we deny that Jesus Christ is God. Others have tried to twist this into saying that God was the Father and became the Son but that is not what Paul said. He said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are separate and distinct persons. Now, we must think about this. If they are separate persons and both are God then God must be more than one person. He is three persons. God is Father, God is the Son, and God is the Holy Spirit. God is three in one.

God blessed us with spiritual blessings. People do not want spiritual blessings, though, do they? They want material blessings. They want resources they can manipulate or use as leverage against other people. Spiritual blessings are not like that. Spiritual blessings cannot be manipulated or used against other people. They cannot be used as leverage to gain something from someone else. Spiritual blessings are eternal; they are not temporary. Spiritual blessings are available now.

Some spiritual blessings we can enjoy are peace with God, forgiveness of sins, spiritual power to live a pure life, spiritual power to deny self, walk in victory over sin, live in distinction from the world system, and authority to drive out the devil. These are spiritual blessings we received through the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure there are more we do not yet know about. The Lord has a storehouse of blessings for those who trust in him.

All spiritual blessings are wrapped up in Christ Jesus. We have nothing outside of Christ. Everything is in Christ Jesus our Lord. When we have the Lord Jesus then we have everything we need. When we have the Lord Jesus we have eternal life. In Christ we have forgiveness of sins. In Christ we have grace to deny self. In Christ we have victory over the power of sin. In Christ we overcome the world. In Christ we defeat the power of the devil.

All the Father gives to us is in his son the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6) The apostle John wrote: "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.*" (1 John 5:12)

1:4

How are we chosen? How is the Christian chosen by God? We are chosen "in him". This is so important to keep in mind as we read this. The Lord Jesus lived before the foundation of the world. The Lord Jesus lived throughout eternity as God. God is Father, God is Son, and God is Holy Spirit. Three

in one. God chose us in Christ. God the Father chose each Christian in Christ. In Christ Jesus. It is vital we see this. People jump right to the Calvinistic idea of predestination when they read this but Paul did not write a Calvinistic principle. Paul was before Calvin. Paul wrote about the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not writing about Calvinism. We need to look at this as it was originally written and not through the lens of a man-made system of theology.

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. When were we saved? I was not born until this last century, but in Christ I was saved before the foundation of the world. How God intended to save me was established before God made the world.

The idea is not my election but that my election is in Christ Jesus. The work of Christ Jesus was established before the world was made. My redemption was completed by Christ in the heart of God before anything was created.

This is true for any man who believes the gospel. Any man who will put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can benefit from what God established before the foundation of the world. It is not God's will for any man to perish. It is not God's will for any man to perish but that all men come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This plan of salvation was written and settled and established before the world was made.

The emphasis is on Christ Jesus and not on me. The focus is not on men but the focus is on Christ Jesus. It is in him we are chosen. In Christ. We are not chosen if we do not believe the gospel. It is only in Christ Jesus anyone is chosen. If it is not God's will for anyone to perish then every man has the ability to believe the gospel. Anyone can believe the gospel if they choose to do so. Man's sinful depravity does not impair man's will to choose when presented with the gospel. Anyone can believe the gospel if they choose to do so. Man is responsible for believing or not believing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We are chosen in Christ. The Lord makes us holy and without blame before him in love. The Lord has taken us for the purpose of making us holy and without blame before him in love. I yearn to be holy and without blame. I yearn and ache to be freed completely from this body of death which is so easily stumbled by sin and temptation.

Does your heart yearn to be holy and without blame? In Christ Jesus we have this and we will have this even more in our resurrected bodies.

1:5-6

The Christian was adopted and accepted according to the good pleasure of God's will. It was God's will to adopt us and make us accepted in the beloved. How is this possible?

We now move beyond forgiveness of sins and into relationship with God our Father. Not only has God justified us and forgiven us but God also adopted us. He took ownership of the lives of those who trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior.

This adoption and making us acceptable was part of a plan God had before time. God predestined that there would be a bride for his son the Lord Jesus Christ. He planned this before anyone was born or

even before the universe was created. The Lord had a blueprint for all of this and knew exactly how it would turn out.

In this verse we see we are adopted by Jesus Christ to himself. The Lord used various word pictures to describe his relationship with us. We are adopted children. We are beloved. We are a bride. All of these are intimate relationships with the Lord Jesus. The Lord loves us more than we can comprehend.

How has the Lord made us accepted in the beloved? He did this by dying for us on the cross. He was buried and he rose again on the third day. Through his death, burial, and resurrection he made us accepted. We are grafted in through the work which Christ did. We become part of God's family through adoption.

God's will be done. There are people whom the Lord adopted and made acceptable. His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He removes every spot and blemish from our lives. He who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ.

1:7

Redemption through blood was from the very beginning. Not long after Adam and Eve sinned and broke their relationship with God the Lord shed the blood of an innocent animal to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. From that point forward God taught us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. The sin problem can only be resolved through the shedding of blood. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled this requirement. I have discovered that when God requires something he fulfills it. The Lord provided himself as a sacrifice for our sins. (Genesis 22:7-8).

We were redeemed from the penalty of our sins. The wages of sin is death. We die because we sin. However, the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for our sins by shedding his own blood for us on the cross. When Jesus shed his blood and died on the cross the perfect substitution was made that fulfilled all the requirements of God's justice. Now God can be just and also justify the sinner who looks to Jesus. When we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ God redeems us from our sins through his own blood. He gave his life for us.

Through the blood of the Lamb we receive forgiveness of sins. Remember what John the Baptist said about the Lord Jesus. John 1:29, *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

Jesus not only died for the people in Israel but he also died for the sin of any man in the world who would believe in him. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord is saved. God's sacrifice is for everyone who will believe the good news. Read Isaiah 53:6.

1:8-10

God adopted us and made us acceptable. He also abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He did this by making his will known to us through his son Jesus Christ. God revealed himself to us through his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

People take the word of God for granted. There are so many Bibles people do not understand what a great gift the Lord gave to us through his son Jesus Christ and the record we have of him in the Bible.

The mystery of his will which was hidden but is now made known is that God is reconciling everything to himself through his son the Lord Jesus Christ. He is gathering together those who believe in his Son. He gathers us together in Christ Jesus. Everything in heaven and in earth is gathered together in Christ Jesus.

The Lord provided himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Everything else we need for life is also provided in the Lord Jesus. He is all we need. He is our provision, he is our protection, and he is our portion. He provides for us, he protect us, and he is the purpose of our life.

God has a specific time for accomplishing his goal and purpose. At the right time the Lord Jesus came into the world and gave his life on Calvary. In the dispensation of the fullness of times he gathered together all things in Christ.

God is never late. Mary and Martha thought the Lord Jesus was too late to save their brother Lazarus. God is never too late. He is resurrection. He is life. Everything in heaven and on earth is under the control of the Lord. We can rest in him.

We can have complete peace in the Lord. He has everything under complete control. We can rest in his plan and purpose. Nothing is impossible with the Lord. He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we could ever ask or think. He causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28).

1:11-12

Christians received an inheritance. Instead of asking what is our inheritance we should ask "who" is our inheritance. Read the verse again: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance". It is in Christ we have received inheritance. He is our inheritance. This is important to understand. Our inheritance is the Lord. Our reward is the Lord. Read Genesis 15:1.

The Lord said to Abram that he was Abram's reward. Reward means inheritance. Those who have heard from the Lord know this. They know their reward and inheritance is not in this temporary world system. Our goal is not to achieve anything in this world system. Those who are deluded by the spirit of the enemy embrace the system of the world which is based on pride. Men make a name for themselves. They try to bring other people underneath the name they create. The more numbers they bring under their name the more provision and protection they have. Their reward is their own selves. Their reward is not the Lord. Their reward is "self". They worship self.

Those who do not believe in God automatically become idolaters. They are self-worshippers. When men turn away from God they automatically turn to self-worship. They are made one with the lie of the serpent and become one with the serpent in principle. This principle is self-love and self-worship. This is the essence of what sin is. Sin is living for self instead of living for God.

Those who live for self lose everything in the long run. Jesus spoke to this. He said those who seek to save themselves will lose themselves but those who die for the gospel and for the Lord will save themselves. The choice is simple. Live for self or live for God.

We cannot escape self-worship by our effort or work. We cannot escape the snare of self-worship by understanding it. The only way to escape from self, sin, the world, and the devil is by putting our entire faith in the finished work of Christ. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. God the Father places the believer into Christ and unites him with the Lord in death, burial, and resurrection. This truth of unity with Christ breaks the power of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Jesus taught his disciples that they could not follow him unless they would deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him. Taking up the cross means to deny self and live according to the same Spirit Jesus lived. Jesus lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When we live according to the Spirit by believing the gospel and trusting in Jesus then we are set free from self-worship. We worship God in spirit and truth.

When we worship God we receive God as inheritance and reward. Those who worship self receive self as reward and inheritance. We can receive more of God or we can have more of ourselves.

But what men do not understand is that more of self is a dark, black pit. More of self is a black darkness which has no bottom or end. It is hell. Self-worship leads to hell.

1:13-14

When we believe the gospel and put our faith in the Lord Jesus we receive the Holy Spirit. We are born again by the Holy Spirit. Our spirit is dead until we believe the gospel and then our spirit is made alive and the Holy Spirit lives in us.

Paul described this as being "sealed" by the Holy Spirit of promise. The Holy Spirit is described as an "earnest" of our inheritance.

To understand "sealed" we need to think of an old-fashioned envelope that we can put a letter in and mail to someone. In ancient times when someone put a letter in an envelope it was sealed with some hot wax and the sender put his stamp on the wax to authenticate who the letter was from.

When we are sealed by the Holy Spirit the Lord puts his stamp on us and this is a guarantee of what is coming in the future. The Holy Spirit is the first experience of what we will inherit in the future. If our inheritance is the Lord then being filled with the Holy Spirit is the first taste of this.

We will receive more of God in the future. There is a day when the "purchased possession" is redeemed. We have to take our time and think about this. Who or what is the purchased possession?

Christians are a purchased possession. We have been purchased by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross at Calvary. God redeemed us from our sins.

Now what does the "redemption" of this purchased possession mean? This is pointing to a time when our mortal body is swallowed up by the life of a resurrected body. We see a fleeting glimpse in these verses but if we read the entire Bible we get a better picture. (1 Corinthians 15:54; 2 Corinthians 5:4)

We are the purchased possession. God's purchased people will be resurrected. The fact we are filled with the Holy Spirit is a guarantee we will be resurrected. Our inheritance is more of what we have just a taste of now. We have a taste of God by being filled with the Holy Spirit.

1:15-16

From here to the end of the first chapter we have an outline of Paul's prayers for the Ephesians. When Paul heard of their faith in the Lord and love for all the saints he prayed for them. How does this apply to us? When we hear of believers in other places we should pray for them.

Paul tied faith and love closely together. Faith in the Lord Jesus and love for the saints. The word "saints" simply means people who believe in the Lord Jesus. If you believe in Jesus you are a saint. No special acts of piety are required to be called a "saint". All we do is believe in the Lord Jesus and we are saints.

Paul responded to the news of these Christians by giving thanks for them. Giving thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ is a basic principle of interceding for the church. We give thanks to God for churches which worship the Lord Jesus and preach the gospel. We give thanks for brothers and sisters in Christ. We will spend eternity with these brothers and sisters in Christ.

He did not cease to give thanks. He continued giving thanks every time he prayed. Thanksgiving is a vital part of prayers. In everything give thanks. Pray without ceasing.

Prayer is life long. It is not something we did one time at an altar. It is a continuous lifestyle of relating to God. We humble ourselves and pray for the church. We intercede for brothers and sisters in Christ. Prayer knits us together with brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul made mention of them in his prayers. He didn't spend all his time in prayer just praying for them. He made mention of them. It is good to remember people in prayer and mention them by congregation and by name. It is good enough to call out the names of people before God. Ask the Lord to bless this church, and these people, and this brother or this sister today.

This is what Christians do. We stay in God's word and we intercede in prayer. Read Acts 6:4.

1:17

We need help from the Holy Spirit to comprehend who God is. We need the Holy Spirit to open our spiritual eyes and ears so we can see and hear the Lord. It is not possible to understand who God is unless the Holy Spirit reveals him to us.

The Holy Spirit is doing this right now for people all over the world. He convinces the world of sin, judgment, and righteousness. Read John 16:8-11. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit works in the life of the believer to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and give us understanding of the Lord Jesus. Read John 16:12-14. Without this Spirit of wisdom

and revelation from the Lord we cannot understand the Bible. I remember clearly before I was saved I read the Bible and did not understand it. I understood it in a general sense but most of it did not make sense to me. When I read Romans chapter 6 I had no spiritual understanding of what Paul was writing about the Christian life.

However, after I was filled with the Holy Spirit I saw the meaning of scriptures and how everything pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in the Old Testament and New Testament points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

God wants us to see his son Jesus clearly. It is impossible for the natural, unbelieving man to see what the Lord Jesus has done. For the unbeliever the gospel is foolishness. They cannot comprehend it. However, for those who believe the gospel it is the power of God for salvation. The gospel is God's power of salvation whether or not anyone believes it, but when we do believe the gospel we come to understand why it is like this. Why did Jesus have to die on the cross for our sins? Why was Jesus buried and then rise again on the third day?

Let us pray the Lord would give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the Lord. Read 1 Corinthians 2:12-14.

1:18

The eyes described here are not physical eyes. These are spiritual eyes. Paul prayed that the spiritual eyes of their understanding would be enlightened.

In God's light we see light. (Psalm 36:9) David prayed for light in Psalm 43:3. God gives light through his word. Read Psalm 119:105. We need light from the Lord in order that we can understand and know what is the hope of his calling. What is the hope of God's calling? It is natural to think that God's calling points to our vocation on earth, and that is part of it, but the hope of God's calling goes beyond what vocation we have.

Read Hebrews 6:18-19. What is within the veil? This described that holy of holy places in the tent of meeting where Moses met God. In the holy of holies was the place where the high priest entered to offer the blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. Our hope is within the veil because that is where the Lord Jesus Christ entered in once and for all with the blood of his own sacrifice. He offered himself as the Lamb of God.

The hope of our calling is in Christ Jesus himself. He is our hope. Our blessed hope is his return to this earth and our being reunited together with him. Read Titus 2:13.

What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? We have already said that the Lord is our inheritance. He is our reward. And what is the Lord's inheritance? He inherits us! The saints are the inheritance of the Lord. He purchased us with his own blood on the cross at Calvary. He gave himself for us. The Lord receives us as his inheritance.

In Hebrews 12:2 it says Jesus endured the cross because of the joy that was set before him. What was that joy? What was the joy that was set before the Lord? I have no doubt that joy was in bringing us with him to heaven. His joy is in securing us for all eternity in a right relationship with himself.

We can be confident that this good work which the Lord started in us will be carried on to completion until the day when he returns.

1:19-20

Why would Paul pray that believers know about God's power? Paul described God's power with the words "exceeding greatness of his power". Paul prayed the Ephesians would not only know God's power but "what is the exceeding greatness of God's power". This power is for those who believe the gospel.

What is the greatest demonstration of God's power in the Bible?

God's power was demonstrated when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. There is no greater demonstration of the power of God in the Bible.

This was not a resuscitation. All the people Jesus raised from the dead before his own resurrection could be considered "resuscitation" in the sense they still died again. Lazarus and Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow from Nain all died again. They are all waiting for the kind of resurrection Jesus had when he was raised from the dead.

When Jesus was raised from the dead he received a new, resurrected body which can never die again. Death no longer has any power over the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul prayed that the Ephesian believers could know the "exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe" he was pointing toward resurrection power. This is the power of the new creation. When we believe the gospel our spirit is made alive. We are born again. We receive the Holy Spirit as the first taste of what is to come. Paul prayed that we can be completely assured of the exceeding greatness of God's power to raise us from the dead.

Why should we be convinced? Why should we have this unshakable confidence in God's power? For the same reason Abraham became convinced that since God told him to sacrifice his son Isaac that God would raise him from the dead.

We need to be convinced of God's resurrection power because this faith sets us free from the fear of death. A fear of death is not something to take lightly. The fear of death brings men into bondage to self and self worship.

Read Hebrews 2:14-15. Man is in shackles because of the fear of death. A man may not even consciously think about death but it is always there. It influences everything men do and even more so as time goes on. Men become more and more in bondage to self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship because they can feel it: time is running out! They become desperate to experience and do things and leave behind something. This brings them into bondage more and more to sin and unbelief.

However, as Christians, we need to be completely set free from our fear of death. We do this by contemplating the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We should pray God would open the

eyes of our spirit so we can know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe. With this spiritual knowledge we are set free from the bondage of self, sin, the world, and the devil.

1:21-23

There are many names in this world. Men worship the names of men: religious leaders, business leaders, political leaders, military leaders. Men love to worship the names of men who were powerful or prestigious or who had position in whatever part of the world system.

One day there will come a man in his own name who will deceive the entire world system in every way, whether it be political, business, or religious. This deceiver will magnify his own name.

Why did Jesus ask the demons their name? They said, "Legion, for we are many". This demonstrated the principle of the world system. Their power is their multiplied numbers which they bring under one name "Legion". Men create a name for themselves and multiply their position, power, provision, and protection through numbers of men brought into slavery under a name. This is how the entire world system works. It operates through magnifying the names of men and multiplying men as numbers underneath a name.

However, our scripture says God the Father gave Jesus a name which is "*far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come...*"

This is why the world system hates God. God will not allow the world system to create a name for its own self that is greater than the name of Jesus Christ. Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This will destroy the pride, prestige, provision, and protection which the world system created for itself. All those who agreed with the world system and made their soul one with the world will be crushed when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. The kingdom of God is like a stone which comes rolling down out of the mountains which crushes the idol of the world system.

God placed all things under the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus crushed the head of the serpent at the cross at Calvary. He spoiled all principalities and powers and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. The Lord Jesus destroyed the work of the devil. For this reason God has given the Lord Jesus authority to rule over all the nations. He will rule world with an iron scepter. His kingdom will not compromise with men who make a name for themselves.

Those who confess Jesus is Lord have his name written on them. They become one with the Lord Jesus in his victory over the world system and over the devil. God makes the enemy ashes under the soles of their feet.

Jesus is the head of the church and king of the nations. He fills everything in every way. He is Lord of all. There is no religious leader, prophet, guru, philosopher, or psychologist who can compare with the Lord Jesus Christ. They are underneath his feet. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns.

Saved By Grace – Ephesians 2

2:1

This old English word "quicken" means to be made alive. We could paraphrase this as "God made you alive who were previously dead in trespasses and sins". How did God make us alive?

To understand the difference between spiritual and physical death it might help us to look at the three parts which make up man. Man is spirit, soul, and body. Man is three in one. His body is the outside which interfaces with the world around him. His soul comprises his mind, will, and emotions. The spirit in man is where the Holy Spirit lives in a believer. The spirit is the seat of the conscience and where a man communes with God or with other spirits.

When a man is born in this world through his mother his body and soul are alive but his spirit is dead. His spirit is cut off from God. This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that for a man to enter the kingdom of God he must be "born again". A man is born once of his earthly mother. He must be "born again" in his spirit by the Holy Spirit in order to be alive spiritually.

Why are men born with a dead spirit? Because we are descendants of Adam and Eve. When Adam and Eve fell they were separated from God. God said to Adam that in the day he ate the forbidden fruit he would die. He did die on that day. He died in his spirit. He was cut off from God in his spirit. When his spirit died his soul (mind, will, and emotions) asserted control and he became "self" conscious. He was no longer led by his spirit anymore but became led by his mind, will, and emotions. This change separated man from God.

When we believe the gospel the Holy Spirit makes our spirit alive again and we are restored to fellowship with God. We become "God" conscious. The more a man grows in his spirit and allows God to strengthen his spirit the more God conscious he becomes and less "self" conscious he becomes. Spiritual growth is "denying" self. It is dying to the self life. It is becoming more and more alive spiritually. We allow our spirit to control us instead of our mind, will, and emotions. Our spirit is under the control of the Holy Spirit.

A side note here: men who are not "born again" are still able to manipulate their spirit to communicate with demons and devils. This is why we have people in the occult and witchcraft. Their spirit is cut off from God but it can still commune with devils. This is one of the reasons why these practices bring the death sentence under God's law. When men use their spirit for anything other than communion with God they bring God's wrath upon themselves. Discerning this will help us to understand scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 7:1. Sin is not only possible in "the flesh" but sin is also committed "in the spirit". Men are capable of sinning against God with their spirit as well as their flesh.

When a man believes the gospel of Jesus Christ he is born again. When he receives God's word then his spirit is made alive. He is enabled to commune with God and worship God in spirit and in truth. It is God's desire for men to worship him in spirit and in truth. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 demonstrates the three in one nature of men.

God made us alive in Christ Jesus. We are born again by the Holy Spirit when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus are saved because calling on the name of Jesus Christ proves their spirit is alive. Only people who are alive spiritually call on the name of Jesus Christ. When a man's spirit is dead he will turn to the world system, to philosophy, and to dead religions of the world system. Men who worship self are dead spiritually. God made us alive and we worship the Lord Jesus in spirit and in truth.

2:2

This verse is profound in application. We can learn a lot about ourselves, the world, and what is behind the scenes of the world system. This verse divides humanity into two separate groups. It shows us mankind is spiritual and is a servant of God or a servant of the devil. There is no in-between.

When we are born we are sinners. We are born self-worshippers. This can be seen even in the earliest signs of understanding in children. "Mine!" says the child who has only learned two words including this one. The other word is "No!"

Man is born focused on self. He lives for self: self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. It is this triangle of self which keeps men in a constant state of blindness to truth and reality. The reality is that the universe does not revolve around us. It revolves, instead, around its creator and maker, God himself.

The "course of the world" is self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. The apostle John wrote it this way: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Here we have the three in one evil spirit of the world. This evil spirit energizes government, business, and society. It is the gasoline for this man-made, Satan-inspired machine which feeds the flesh of men and starves his spirit.

The pattern of the world is putting self first. The first commandment in God's kingdom is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second commandment is to love our neighbor as we (already) love ourselves. These commandments contradict how the world system operates. The "course of the world" is in opposition to loving God and loving our neighbor.

In the same breath as "course of the world" we understand there is a spirit behind the course of the world. What is this evil spirit? Paul called this spirit "the prince of the power of the air". No where else in the Bible do we see this title for Satan. Only here in this verse.

It is important that the Holy Spirit revealed this aspect of the enemy to us. This enemy is a prince of the power of the air. He moves around in the atmosphere? UFOs? Radio waves? Television signals? Media broadcasting? What is the application of "*prince of the power of the air*". I think all of the above. Where did men get the knowledge of building airplanes? The pride of men provided the answer for us. We are so smart and clever, right? I don't think so. We are seeing the explosion of knowledge and travel the prophet Daniel foretold would exist in the last days.

This technology and ability to travel in the air comes from "the prince of the power of the air".

How did the prince of the power of the air do this? This verse tells us plainly this evil spirit is working through the "children of disobedience".

Every person who does not believe in Jesus is controlled by this prince of the power of the air. This spirit works through every unbeliever.

How? Fallen men are one with it. We became one with the serpent in the garden of Eden when we chose to believe the devil's lie instead of God's word.

What you believe makes you who you are. If you do not believe the Bible and God and the gospel and Jesus then you are a self-worshiper. You are one with the serpent. You are a devil follower. You are becoming a devil yourself. You are preparing yourself for the lake of fire.

Repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn your back on the course of the world. Deny self. Repent! Put your faith and trust and hope and love in the Lord Jesus Christ and no one else.

2:3

The word "conversation" is different from the modern meaning of the word. In this context "conversation" meant lifestyle. In the previous verse the children of disobedience were mentioned. Paul said the devil and the world system work through the children of disobedience. He said we all had our lifestyle in the past according to the pattern of the world.

He expounded more on the pattern of the world by describing it as "the lusts of our flesh" and "desires of the flesh and of the mind". From this we understand that the natural, unbelieving man is controlled by his body and mind. He seeks to fill the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

We all came from the natural man. When we are born we have this nature of the children of wrath. Everyone is born with the nature of someone who brings down God's wrath on them. This is because we are descendants of a father and mother who changed from their original creation into something fallen, broken, twisted, corrupt. They changed from people who were with God to people who became one with the serpent.

What does it mean to be "one" with someone. It means you take on their thoughts, their beliefs, their attitudes. Our physical genetics and DNA was changed into something else. Man was originally something far different from what he became after he took the devil's word against God.

Man is spirit, soul, and body. All this was changed by the fall of man. Man's spirit died. His soul asserted itself as the new commander. In many people the soul no longer leads but the base fleshly instinct and the body leads them. We see this in people who completely give themselves over to drug addiction, alcoholism, or demon possession.

Christians were all once part of this group under the wrath of God. They are different now because they believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their spirit was made alive. I think this transformation is literal,

instant, and changes more than just the spirit in man. I think it has a profound effect on the soul and the body as well. We know eventually God will redeem our physical bodies at resurrection.

Children of wrath follow the desires of the mind and the body. Their will is bent on self-provision and self-protection. They assert their own righteousness by self-defense. If you have ever met someone who constantly defends themselves you have met someone who lives according to the desires of the flesh and the mind.

We need to remember this is what we came from. We need to remember that the only difference between a Christian and a person under God's wrath is the work Christ did for us. The Lord Jesus died on the cross for us, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This is the only thing that separates the Christian from those under God's wrath.

2:4

It is the Lord who saved us. We don't save ourselves. Once we wandered around in darkness and did not know where to go or how to get there. Then out of the darkness came the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We grabbed hold on it. We took hold on the outstretched hand of the Lord Jesus.

But God! If not for God's grace and mercy we would never make it out of sin, self-worship, the world system, and Satan. That dark world of unbelief had us completely surrounded on every side.

Why does God love us so much? God is rich in mercy. God is love. He extends mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Why do men reject this? Why do men turn away from the outstretched hand of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why do they run away from the light of the gospel?

But God! I could not save myself. I could not create my own light to dispel the darkness. I could not flap my arms or sprout wings and fly away from the darkness. No matter what I did or where I went I was suffocated by the darkness of unbelief.

But the Lord stepped in. He sent people who carried the light in their heart and shared the good news. I remember their faces. I don't remember all their names but I remember their faces. I remember where I was at when I heard the good news and knew it was the truth. I could look at the lives of these men and I knew they had what I needed.

God had mercy on me. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever would believe in him would receive eternal life.

Eternal life is to be reconnected to God the Father through the Son Jesus Christ. Eternal life is to know God once again after being separated from him. To be with the Lord is to have life. To be separated from the Lord is death. Read Romans 6:23.

2:5

This verse circles back to verse 1. Let's read verse 1 again and think about this: "*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*"

Death is separation from God. Sin separated us from God. Death and sin are tied together. One goes with the other. If death and sin go together, then life and righteousness also go together.

How can someone who is dead in sin be made alive? Remember the word "quicken" here means "made alive". Even when we were dead in our sins God made us alive together with Christ. That "together with Christ" is the key here. There is no life outside of Jesus Christ. It is only through being joined together and united with the Lord Jesus Christ are we made alive. We receive life through the Lord Jesus Christ. He literally raises us from the dead.

When Christ was raised from the dead we were also raised together with him. Just like in Adam we died in our sins, so with the Lord Jesus Christ we are made alive because of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. God took us out of Adam and placed us into Christ. This is the work of God from beginning to end. Read 1 Corinthians 1:30. These are precious words to hold onto. God placed us into Christ Jesus. We cannot put ourselves there. We must trust that God put us in Christ Jesus. It does not depend on our ability, our righteousness, what we have or have not done.

This is what it means "by grace ye are saved". It is God's work from beginning to end. We had no part in salvation. God did it all for us. The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

God made us alive in Christ. When Jesus rose from the grave we came with him. You might be scratching your head right now and wondering how is this all possible.

Jesus told a Pharisee once: "You must be born again!"

The Pharisee tried to understand this logically using human wisdom. He could not understand how a grown man could be born "again". But the Lord Jesus was speaking spiritually.

What God did for us is eternal and it is real. Just like we cannot see the wind but we know the wind is real because we feel it on our face, in our hair, and we can see it move the trees. Wind is real. The invisible world of God is real also. The facts in the Bible about salvation and redemption and eternal life are real. These facts in the Bible are more real than what we can see, hear, feel, and taste right now. Everything we see at the moment in this world is passing away. But God's kingdom and God's reality will last forever.

God made man to live forever. His soul cannot be erased from the universe. Our soul will go on existing in one state or another. We will either end up in a lake of fire or we will end up in heaven with God. The only way to be saved from hell and go to heaven is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Romans 10:9-10, 13.

2:6

God the Father placed us into his Son. When Jesus died on the cross we died with him. When Jesus was buried in the tomb we were buried with him. When Jesus rose from the dead on the third day we rose with him.

After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples and then he ascended to heaven. We ascended in Christ Jesus back to God the Father and we are seated at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. Some people call this "positional truth" because our position in Christ is sitting in the heavenly places. However, I like to call this "true truth" because it is more real than our current situation in this world system. The world is passing away but God's kingdom will last forever.

This verse says when Jesus ascended to heaven we ascended with him. He made us sit with him in heaven. In Christ Jesus we are seated with God in heaven. This is the position of the Christian. We can have complete assurance and confidence in our eternal salvation because the Bible says God "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus".

To sit down means to take authority. When Jesus taught his disciples he would sit down. When he taught people he would sit down. Sitting down means to take authority. This verse points to the authority we have in Christ Jesus.

This does not mean we are little gods like the perverse prosperity false preachers want to convince people. We are in Christ Jesus. We are not Christ or another Christ. That is a part of the last days deception and delusion.

It is good for us to know we are secure in our relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. God gives us spiritual authority to proclaim his word, to pray and intercede for people, and to drive out the enemy with the truth.

2:7

There are ages after this current age. There are "ages to come"! What does this mean? It means there is a great future ahead for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is an amazing, fantastic adventure ahead for us who believe. This life is not even scratching the surface of all the Lord has prepared for those who love him.

In those ages to come God will point to those who were redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. These redeemed souls are proof of God's grace and kindness which he gave through his son Christ Jesus. God's love and kindness is demonstrated in and through his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way anyone can truly benefit from God's grace and kindness throughout all eternity. God's grace and kindness toward us is through the Son of God Jesus Christ.

God's grace is described as "exceeding riches". Words fail to really grasp and illustrate what this means. God's grace is exceedingly rich. There is no end to it. It is an ocean. It is a mountain. It is like all the stars in the sky at night. It is endless and overflowing and abounding towards us.

All of God's grace is bound up in his son Jesus Christ. Those who reject the Lord Jesus are rejecting God's grace and his kindness. All that God has done for us was done through his Son Jesus Christ.

Turn away from religion, philosophy, and psychology. Turn your heart toward knowing the Son of God Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God. God is three in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is only by knowing God through Jesus Christ that anyone can truly know life and experience life as God created us.

2:8-9

Memorize these verses. These are some of the most important bible verses a Christian can know. Get it deep in your heart, meditate on it, and make it part of your every day thinking and living. It is by grace you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves. We are saved by God's gift. Salvation is not of works so that no man can boast.

Why is this so important? Because those who believe doing good works earns them a right to salvation are of their father the devil. They are following the way of Cain and man-made, self-centered religion. Doing works to please God is self-made religion.

Our salvation is a gift from God. This gift is his son the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins, was buried, and who rose again on the third day. Salvation comes by simple faith in the finished, completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we are saved. All we have to do is believe in him and call on his name and we are saved.

All the thief on the cross had to do for salvation was pray to Jesus. He asked Jesus to remember him. That is all he said. He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

If a man knows these verses and truly understands these verses then this knowledge will save him from most of the false religion out there. There are other and more subtle deceptions people use while still talking about grace that can lead people astray as well. However most of the false religion can be avoided by just knowing and believing these simple Bible verses.

No one will ever boast before God that they earned their salvation by doing good works. All of our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. We can do nothing to earn our salvation and prove that we are righteous. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. No one is righteous, no, not one man. Our only hope is faith in the Lord Jesus and receiving his free gift of salvation.

2:10

We are God's workmanship. We are his work of art. We are his poem. We are his painting, his photograph, his novel, his inspiring speech, his vessel of honor. We are his. We belong to God because he made us. Read Psalm 100:3. Man did not make himself. Chance and evolution did not create man. God created mankind. We are his workmanship. We are proof that God exists. We are proof of the great Designer, the greater Worker, the Creator.

We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Christians do good works, not to obtain salvation, but because they are saved by grace through faith. When a man is truly saved his life will produce the good works which God ordained for him to walk in. His life will produce the fruit which God put into him before he was born.

It is only in Christ Jesus that we can truly fulfill the good works we were created for by God. It is only in God's will that we can find the true purpose for which we were created.

Those good works are not something to strive for, but something that flows out of the heart of those who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Good works are the result of a heart that is right with God by faith in Jesus Christ.

God ordained ahead of time that we should walk in these good works. As long as we keep our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ we will walk in these good works.

Jesus taught about this by using the illustration of a vine, branches, and fruit. Read John 15:4-5.

2:11-18

The message is simple. God's plan from the beginning was that not only those in the nation of Israel would have an opportunity to believe the good news of Jesus Christ but also the entire world. All the Gentile nations were included in God's plan of salvation. Israel is special because it is through these people that God gave us the Messiah and the Bible.

The gospel is for everyone who will believe. No one is excluded from hearing the gospel. Everyone is invited to hear the gospel and believe the good news that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

The outward sign of difference between a Jew and a Gentile was the ordinance of circumcision. The Lord told Abraham to circumcise the men of his household. This was a sign of the covenant promise which God gave to Abraham. Those promises and that covenant had to do with the nation of Israel and the land which they would inherit.

Christians do not have any kind of ordinance they are commanded to follow to prove we are a Christian. Some may argue that baptism is the outward sign of the Christian but it is not. There is nothing wrong with getting water baptized as a testimony of your faith in God, but we should remember that baptism is used as a symbol or illustration in the New Testament of salvation. Study the word baptism and you will find that it is used as an illustration. Noah was baptized in water as well. He was saved through water. Water baptism symbolized that we died with Christ, we were buried with him, and we were raised together with him. It is not the water that gives spiritual life. Faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ is what gives spiritual life.

Paul said that what Christ accomplished at the cross removed the barrier between the Jew and the Gentile. We now live in the day of the church. In each day, however, there still exists Israel and the nations. Israel and the nations are currently in the background but they are still part of God's plan. In the first day when Israel was front and center the church and the nations existed in the background. The church was the believing remnant within Israel who believed God's promise of the seed of the woman, the Messiah, and knew the blood sacrifices were a symbol pointing to the true Lamb of God who would come to save us. On the third day, which is coming soon, the nations will be dealt with. Israel will inherit the promises given to her. They will demonstrate to the nations the true nature of spiritual authority on the earth. The church will also exist in the third day as the bride of Jesus Christ. We will reign and rule with the Lord Jesus on this planet.

God removed the walls between Jew and Gentile and created a new man in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus is our peace now. He removed the barriers of religion, race, culture, and language. All of that is

secondary to our primary identity in the Lord Jesus Christ. All the racial and religious strife which we see in the world today is because people refuse to identify themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the Lord Jesus Christ we have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit. There is no other way for us to draw near to God. It is the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who washes away all of our sins and makes a way that we can draw near to God in full assurance of faith. It is through the Lord Jesus we can draw near to God in prayer. Jesus is the only way, he is the only truth, he is the only life. There is no other name given under heaven whereby men are saved. Jesus is Lord.

2:19-22

Gentiles have the opportunity to be saved by faith in Jesus just like any Jewish person. The gospel is for all people. The Jewish people are special to the Lord. They are his brethren. It is through the Jewish people the Messiah came into the world. It is through the Jewish people we have the Bible. If not for Israel we would not know the one true God.

Non-Jewish people are no longer strangers to the God of Israel. The Lord Jesus revealed Jehovah God to the entire world. The gospel will be preached in every nation before it is all over.

Paul compared the church to a holy temple. Jesus is the chief cornerstone of this temple. The early church provided the foundation through recording the New Testament and preaching the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. This church is made up of Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are the house of God where God's Holy Spirit lives. The church is not the physical wood, brick, or stone buildings with a steeple on top. The church is the people who believe the gospel. The Holy Spirit lives in people now, and not in a building or city. God is everywhere. He is not restricted to one geographical location.

Having said that Jerusalem and the land of Israel is special to God. The Lord put his name on the city of Jerusalem and will one day return and set his foot on the Mount of Olives again.

Apostles and prophets are still with us today. Some may take this verse and try to teach that the apostles and prophets were only needed in the first century but after the scriptures were written we no longer need apostles and prophets. My question is this: do we need pastors? Do we need teachers? Do we need evangelists? Then we certainly still need apostles and prophets today as well. Read Ephesians 4:11-13.

Have we all come in the unity of the faith yet? Has we been made a perfect man yet? I think there is still work to do in building the church. This work will not be finished until the Lord Jesus returns and raptures the church. We need all of the gifts which God gave to the church. We need apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We need them in the church. Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-28.

Abundantly Above – Ephesians 3

3:1

Gentiles were brought to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was a Jew and the Bible is Jewish. However, God wanted all nations to receive salvation through Jesus Christ who came through the nation of Israel.

Paul said it was for this reason he was "Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles". God appointed Paul to be an apostle for the Gentiles. His ministry was preaching the gospel to the Gentile nations. He traveled the world preaching the gospel, establishing churches, and then defending those churches against false teachers.

Why did Paul call himself a "prisoner". He was in chains by the Roman government. Paul spent a lot of his ministry as a prisoner of the Roman government. This was how he traveled to the city of Rome aboard a slave ship as a prisoner under Roman guard.

But Paul did not say he was a prisoner of Rome. He said he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ. No matter what Paul's circumstances he knew God was in control. He saw by faith behind all his circumstances God was in control. The Lord guided Paul no matter how difficult circumstances were. The same is true for us. Read Psalm 139:1-5. The Lord knows everything about us. The Lord is good, his plan is good, and he causes all things to work together for the good of those who love him.

3:2-6

What exactly was Paul pointing to when he spoke of this mystery given to the apostles and prophets? Some people say this mystery was the gospel. However, this was not a mystery to John the Baptist. This was not a mystery to Abraham who said God would provide himself a sacrifice. It was not a mystery to Isaiah who graphically portrayed the suffering of the Messiah in Isaiah 53.

This mystery Paul talked about was that the Gentiles would be included in the gospel. That was a mystery to people before the church came to be. Even the disciples of the Lord Jesus before Pentecost did not really understand the Messiah was for Gentiles as well as Jews. Though Jesus demonstrated this many times they still did not understand. He showed this when he reached out to the Samaritan woman at the well. He showed this when he ministered to the Centurion with his word of power. He showed this when he healed the Gentile woman's demon possessed daughter. Jesus showed the gospel was for the Gentile as well as the Jew but they did not get it. They were slow to accept that the message of the Messiah was not just for the Jew but for the entire world.

We have the same problem today. People think the gospel is for one group of people instead of the entire world. The gospel is for everyone. Everyone is invited to believe the gospel and be saved.

The mystery of Christ which was hidden was that he would be the Savior of the world and not just the political deliverer for the Jewish people. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world. This gospel was more inclusive than the Jews realized.

The religious leaders attacked Jesus because he ministered to a certain group of people. Jesus reached out to sinners. He reached out to men, women, and children. There was no age group, gender group, no ethnic or religious group which Jesus did not reach out to. The true church today reaches out to the whole world. They do not restrict themselves to one part of society but reach everyone.

Let me repeat myself. The gospel was known from the time of Adam and Eve. God proclaimed the gospel in the garden of Eden when he said the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. This is the first appearance of the gospel in the Bible. Men always knew the gospel from the beginning. This was not the mystery. The mystery was that God wanted to save the entire world and not just the nation of Israel. It is not God's will for any man to perish but for all men to come to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:7-9

Paul was specifically called to serve the Gentiles by preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice the humility Paul displayed when he said he was less than the least of all saints. This grace of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was assigned to Paul by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most of the original apostles of the Lord Jesus focused their ministry with the Jewish people in Jerusalem. As the Lord Jesus said this gospel spread from Jerusalem, to Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost ends of the earth.

We think we understand that the gospel is for Jew and Gentile. But there are people who do not act like it. It takes special ministries to preach the gospel to Jewish people. It takes God raising up special ministries to reach people in the inner cities, or in prisons, or in institutions. Why does there need to be special ministries which reach specific groups? I think it is because the church does not see this mystery which Paul talked about. We need to understand the gospel is for everyone. The Lord is calling everyone to believe the gospel.

We say we believe this but do we act like it? Are we reaching people outside of our ethnic or language group? Are we reaching people around the world? Missions needs to be uppermost in the heart of Christians. We need pray the Lord will send forth workers into the harvest and be ready to say to the Lord, "Here am I, Lord, send me."

3:10

What are these principalities and powers in heavenly places? One answer to this is angels. Angels are watching the church. They want to learn about the God they serve and they learn about him by watching what he does through the church on earth.

Read **1 Peter 1:12**. Angels desire to look into these things which pertain to the gospel and the church. They see through the church the revelation of God.

This is what God does. He reveals himself through Israel, he reveals himself through the church, he reveals himself through the nations. God is three in one. Prophet, priest, king. Israel, the church, and the kingdom. Three days and all is done in New Jerusalem.

The angels, no doubt, anxiously watch the developments in the church. The Lord Jesus Christ is returning to earth. He will rapture his people. We will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The return of the Lord Jesus is the blessed hope of the church.

3:11-13

God's eternal purpose is in Christ Jesus. God's eternal plan and goal and purpose is all in his son Jesus Christ.

Through the Lord Jesus we have confidence to approach God's throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16, "*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*"

Paul experienced tribulation and he said it was a result of his relationship with these Christians. He was suffering for them. He said this was their "glory". What does this mean?

What do Christians glory in? We glory in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel is that Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day.

In the same pattern these Christians could glory in what Paul suffered for them. Instead of being discouraged that he suffered he said they could glory in his suffering. He knew that he suffered so that they could receive the gospel which gave them life in Christ Jesus.

Each Christian is in the same position as Paul. Each one of us lays down our life so the gospel can continue to spread. We lay down our lives so others can also live.

Do not be ashamed of suffering for the gospel. Do not be ashamed when we suffer as a result of our desire to follow God. It is guaranteed you will suffer in this world if you follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The servant is not greater than his master. Read 2 Timothy 3:12.

God's eternal purpose is for men to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so they can receive eternal life and glorify God forever. The goal is the glory of God. We are called to honor, praise, and glorify God by believing his word, by standing in the gospel, and looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Let us draw near to God with full assurance of faith. Do not be afraid to suffer for the gospel. Keep looking up. Our redemption draws nearer every day.

3:14-16

Paul's prayers for the Ephesians always stands out to me when I read the New Testament. I think these prayers are a pattern of intercession for the church.

He took the position of humility before God the Father. He prayed to the heavenly Father as Jesus taught us to pray. He prayed to God the Father of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Remember Jesus prayed about his Father's name. Read John 17:26.

This family on earth and in heaven is brought together in the name of the Father. We draw near to God through his son Jesus and pray in the name of Jesus to the Father.

Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God would give to them out of the riches of his glory that they be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. We should pray our brothers and sisters in Christ will be strong in the spirit. We pray they may be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in their inner man.

Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. We need to remember the Holy Spirit abides in our heart by faith. We were changed. We were born again. We are no longer in darkness but were brought out of darkness and into God's marvelous light. We were translated out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God's son Jesus Christ.

We need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. We need a strong spirit to endure what this world will throw at us. We need power from the Holy Spirit to bring the flesh under subjection and to walk in victory over self, sin, the world, and the devil.

Lord, strengthen us with might by your Spirit in our inner man. I pray we may take hold on that for which you took hold on us. Amen.

3:17-19

Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be rooted and grounded in love. He prayed they could know the love of Christ. Then he added that the love of Christ "which passeth knowledge". How can we be rooted, grounded, and know this love of Christ if it "passeth knowledge". It surpasses the ability to understand it so how can we comprehend the breadth, the length, the depth, and the height of the love of Christ?

Paul pointed to a knowledge that was not intellectual facts or data about God's love. We can memorize the verses. We can know the systems of theology regarding God's love. But there is a love of Christ which Paul prayed for the Ephesians to know which was beyond knowing. It was beyond grasping with the mind.

This is the love which can only be seen with spiritual eyes. It can only be grasped by revelation from God. It was obvious when a man experienced this. It changed how he behaved toward other people.

Our relationship with God goes beyond intellectual understanding. We must grasp with the intuition how much God loves us. We can read the bible verses and yet not understand the love of Christ. But when God opens our spiritual eyes then we can see it. We see God's love demonstrated through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, through his death, burial, and resurrection. Finally we understand what is beyond comprehension.

Jesus loves me! He died for me! He lives today to intercede and pray for me! He will return again to receive me to himself that where he is I may be also. Hallelujah!

3:20-21

I quote this promise a lot when I pray. I pray for my needs, for the needs of others, and then I say, "*Lord, you are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that I could ask or think.*" I say this because I know God is smarter than me and knows best.

It is always right to humble our hearts and acknowledge we don't know what is best for our lives. I want to always remember to ask God to answer prayers that I could not think to ask because of lack of imagination or a lack of faith on my part.

I am thankful the Lord is free to bless me in ways I could never imagine myself. This has been the story of most of my life. Everything good in my life was unexpected and unplanned. All the good things which I experienced were unexpected surprises from my heavenly Father.

I have lived a much better life than what I could have planned for myself. I might have planned out a life of financial security and stability. I might have planned a life where I had a stable and consistent career. I might have planned a much different life than what I experienced. But I would have missed out on learning so much about God's mercy, God's grace, God's forgiveness. I would have missed out on so much if I had planned out my own life.

I surrender my life today to my loving heavenly Father. I look forward to all he has prepared for me in the future. It will be a future I could not have imagined. It will be a life filled with unexpected surprises and joy from my heavenly Father. Lord, may your will be done.

Old Man and New Man – Ephesians 4

4:1-3

Paul identified himself as a prisoner of the Lord. He was also a prisoner of Rome, but Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of Rome. He considered himself a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. This showed Paul had a firm grasp on God's sovereignty. He knew behind every circumstance in life that God was in control. The Lord directed his steps every day. He was therefore a prisoner of the Lord.

He besought the Ephesians. This was different from commanding people. I've served in ministry where men thought they should command and threaten people. How different was the attitude Paul showed here. He appealed to the Ephesians to do the right thing. He did not command them, even though he obviously had authority from the Lord to command people. He did not lord himself over people unlike almost every ministry leader I've encountered. Instead, he humbled himself and appealed to people.

He asked them to walk worthy of the vocation they were called. A vocation, in this context, was more than just a person's job or career. The vocation the Lord called us to is primarily to be a Christian. This means we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We do not relate to the world anymore on the same terms of the world. Instead, we relate to the world on the Lord's terms. The Lord is our provider. A job does not provide for us. The world system does not give us bread. No, our bread comes from God. We live according to every word of God. We don't think like the world does. We do not exalt our name in the hope of gaining power over others. We do not seek to dominate and control other people. Instead, we simply let our light shine for Jesus.

He outlined how we should walk worthy of our vocation. We do this with all lowliness and meekness and with long suffering. We are forbearing of one another. This means an attitude of absolute humility and we consider others better than ourselves. How do we apply this? Do not exalt yourself over

people. Look for ways to serve people and to help others. Make it your goal to edify, exhort, and comfort others.

The goal is to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This unity is not the kind of unity which apostate religious systems try to establish. They want us to all agree to whatever is the lowest religious denominator. They want us to agree that everyone has a valid "truth" and to respect the "truth" of others. This is not the unity which the Bible is talking about. Unity in the Bible is based on the truth of the Bible. Our unity must be found in a combination of truth and love for others. We cannot compromise truth and we must love one another. How that works out is accomplished by people living humble and meek lives and being patient with one another.

4:4-6

These verses point us to the narrow path and the straight gate. We enter through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one body. This body is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit. There is only one hope in our calling and that hope is the Lord Jesus. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.

What was Paul saying? One point I get from this is how absolute truth is. Men always want to question God. They always want to have doubts and unbelief about the absolute truth of God. They want to divide into camps and have different ideas about who the Lord is, or about what faith is, or about what baptism is. Each one of these points Paul listed have been causes for church splits and for separate denominations of churches.

No matter what men have done there is still only one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. There is only one Father of all, who is above all, through all, in all.

I am reminded that God hates those who cause strife and division. Read Proverbs 6:16,19.

How do we sow discord? We do this when we think too highly of ourselves. We do this when we think we are better than others. We do this when we exalt ourselves over others. We do this when we won't associate with someone because we think we are better than them. This attitude of pride causes discord and division more than anything. I believe this is the basis of all discord and division in the church.

4:7-13

The Lord gave gifts to the church. These gifts are people who serve in the church with specific spiritual ability. Paul listed these gifts to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Some teach we no longer have apostles or prophets but I cannot go along with that. If we have pastors, teachers, and evangelists then we also have apostles and prophets.

I think it is a mistake for men to give themselves titles like "Prophet Smith" or "Apostle Jackson". We are asking for trouble when we put titles into our name. This attracts spirits of pride and exalting of self over others.

However, there are people who have these gifts in the church. People with the true gift of being a prophet or apostle will probably never be known by many. They are unassuming people. They go about serving as the Lord called them. The further you go down this list the more you hear people putting the title in their name. "Pastor" and "Evangelist" are pretty common titles people claim for themselves.

The work of these men is to edify the body of Christ. They are called to help build, encourage, and comfort God's people. This is done in many ways and mostly not from behind a pulpit. There is a lot of work to be done with individuals one at a time. In my opinion those who stand behind a pulpit have little influence. The ones who truly have influence are those who serve others one by one in the body of Jesus Christ. They are usually anonymous servants who go around ministering to the needs of other people.

God has called us to serve one another in love and to use our spiritual gifts for the building of the church.

The goal is that we may all grow into a perfect man unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

4:14-16

There is a danger that Christians can be tossed and carried away with winds of doctrine which blow through the church. Many times these waves of doctrines are promoted by men who follow self-interest. They are not interested in building the church as much as building their ministry or their own name or brand. Paul said these men lie in wait to deceive. How do they deceive? All men have to do in order to spread deception is teach by word and example that the gospel is about self-provision, self-provision, or self-worship. When men focus on self and teach man-centered doctrine they appeal to fallen human nature. This deception doubtless brings in money to their ministry and will lead the people in the church further away from the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The remedy for this problem is for men to speak the truth in love. The goal is spiritual maturity for Christians so that they will not be moved by these deceptive waves of doctrines. Instead, they will be rooted and grounded in the knowledge of God's word. This is one reason I am a big fan of systematic teaching of God's word. I think expository teaching of God's word is important so the church can be grounded in truth.

For most of my young Christian life I was only exposed to topical preaching, and mostly preaching of salvation or holy living or baptism in the Holy Spirit. However, as I went on with the Lord he led me to a church where the Bible was taught systematically chapter by chapter. I grew spiritually as I studied and listened to God's word taught in this method. There is, of course, a place for topical preaching, but I think the church desperately needs to be taught God's word from cover to cover. We need to understand the foundations of what Christians believe so we will not be deceived by winds of doctrines which blow through the church.

Especially in today's world with the mass media that men have and with social media many winds of doctrines blow through the church. It is so important that we stay in God's word and stay in prayer.

4:17-19

Paul instructed the Ephesians to stop living like they were unsaved. They could not live like unbelievers. Paul described unbelievers as men with vain minds, a darkened understanding, and cut off from God because of ignorance. They are callous toward God which results in an immoral life and a continual desire for sin and pleasure.

Sin does not satisfy. The more someone sins the more he wants to sin. It is a downward spiral of intensifying desire which is never satisfied.

This is graphically observed in people caught in drug addiction. I know this because I was saved from this lifestyle as a young man. Once I was saved the Lord allowed me for awhile to help people escape drug addiction, also.

I learned that sin is the root problem of drug addiction. Drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality are symptoms of what Paul described: vain minds, no understanding, ignorant, in darkness, blind hearts, callous, surrendering to a lust for pleasure and sin in increasing intensity.

When a man becomes a Christian he no longer lives this way. The Holy Spirit who lives inside him won't let him. The Holy Spirit continuously pulls at his heart and mind until the man humbles himself and repents.

The unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit living inside him and his conscience becomes callous the longer he persists in sin.

A Christian is not able to persist in sin. He may fall into sin but he hates it. He despises his compromises, temptations, his stumbling in sin. It is not his desire anymore. Sin is an affliction and a source of sorrow for the Christian.

For the unbeliever sin is as natural as a fish swimming in water. It is as natural as breathing in the air.

After a Christian is born again he must be told who he is in Christ. He must learn through teaching and through Bible study that he is a new creation in Christ. The old life of sin is no longer his lifestyle.

Why does a Christian need to be told this? Because old habits continue to control his mind unless his mind is renewed. Just because a man is born again in his spirit does not mean his mind knows the truth about his salvation. His mind must be saved as well.

He must put off the old way of thinking and learn how to live as a Christian. The life of a Christian is a life from heaven. It is not of the earth and men do not automatically know how to live a Christian life, even after they are born again by God's Holy Spirit.

Thank the Lord he gives the church gifts who teach, preach, edify, exhort, encourage, comfort and instruct. We need each person in the body of Christ to work together in building the church.

4:20-24

The Christian, from day one of believing the gospel, enters a process of putting off and putting on. This is difficult, however, unless the Christian understands completely he is a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). Through experience I learned that those who do not believe they are a new man in Christ have little victory in putting off the old man and growing into the new man.

The old man is an entire way of thinking and living. It is an attitude of unbelief at the root, but in these roots are entangled attitudes of rebellion, independence, and stubbornness. All these areas need to be exposed and thrown down and replaced with the correct Christian attitude.

This is what people in the church call "discipleship", but when I was a young Christian it was more than just discipleship: it was life or death. In my life it was necessary to throw off the old man as fast as possible. The old man was dying quickly because of drugs. I needed to throw him off and put on the new man as fast as I could.

I changed faster the more I forgot about myself and served other people. The more I studied God's word and put it into practice the more my life changed. This change was accelerated when I had an opportunity to serve in ministry helping the same kind of people I was.

How can we be renewed in the spirit of our mind? I discovered the most important thing in changing my life is to develop the willingness to be corrected. If I would not allow myself to be corrected then I would not grow spiritually. I cannot change my life by myself. I cannot really change unless I put God's word into practice. Obeying God's word means I submit to other people. It means I humble myself. It means I am willing to be corrected, criticized, and yes, even receive rebuke from others.

Why? Because this is the only way to discover the attitudes of the old man inside my head which need to be driven out. Unless those attitudes are exposed they cannot be thrown out and replaced. These attitudes can only be exposed in the context of living the Christian life with other Christian people. It can only be found out in the context of interacting with people. God can use unbelievers to bring out our bad attitudes and show us areas where we need to put off the old man and put on the new man.

Have faith in God he will do this work in your life. All we have to do is believe God, humble our heart, and be ready to accept correction. Do not defend yourself against other people. Even if people who correct you are wrong, just stay quiet, pray about it, and thank the Lord for the lessons he is teaching you. It won't damage anything except your pride to be corrected and it is God's goal for your pride to die. So rejoice!

4:25

The basis for telling the truth, in this context, is our relationship with people in the church. Paul saw the church as a body made of many members, and each one needed the next one in order to function correctly. If one person started lying then everyone would get hurt by this. We are no longer independent when we become Christians. We are part of a larger whole. What we do has an affect on the people around us.

In this verse Paul said we need to put away lying. This is what the ten commandments tell us to do. Thou shalt not lie. Don't bear false witness. Don't exaggerate, mislead, or deceive others. When we lie we are not taking God's side but the side of the devil.

Jesus said the devil is a liar. Read John 8:44. Jesus tied lying with murder. All of God's commandments are tied together. When we break one we wind up breaking all of them.

Lying should not be tolerated in a Christian. Before I become a Christian I was a compulsive liar. I told lies when telling the truth would have been easier. I told lies all the time. My entire life was a lie. However, when the Lord Jesus Christ set me free from drug addiction he also set me free from lies. I no longer wanted to tell a lie. I wanted to always tell the truth even when telling the truth would get me into trouble.

Jesus said we can know the truth and the truth will set us free. Lies and the habit of lying will only keep us in bondage to self-worship and sin.

Stop lying! Tell the truth. You'll actually have a lot less anxiety and stress in life by telling the truth all the time.

4:26-27

Jesus showed anger in his life, and yet Jesus never sinned. His anger was righteous and it was holy. Remember he made a whip out of some cords of rope and drove money changers out of the temple area. He overturned their tables. Remember Jesus was angry at the religious leaders because of the hardness of their hearts.

Anger itself is not sin. However, it can become sinful depending upon what we are angry for.

If we are angry because we get our feelings hurt by someone then we are in sin. We should not be angry for selfish reasons but only for righteous reasons. It is righteous to be angry at sin. It is righteous to be angry at the devil and what he does in the world. It is right to be angry at the sin that is in the world.

However, when we are angry because someone violated one of the items on our list of personal rights then we are in sin. I taught a class many years ago called "Anger and Personal Rights". It is one of the Group Studies For New Christians taught at Teen Challenge. In that class we learned that most of the time when we get angry it is because someone violated our personal rights.

What is a personal right? Here are some examples:

I have a right that people respect me. I have a right that people listen to me. I have a right to be heard. I have a right to give my opinion. I have a right to be treated fairly. This is just a sample of thoughts that go through most people's minds. All these thoughts fill our mind because men put themselves first and worship self.

Self worship is a hard way to live. When we worship self we have to work really hard at defending ourselves when other people do not follow our list of personal rights. These are rules we create and

expect other people to follow, even if we never listed the rules for them. We just expect other people to know these things and act accordingly. When they don't follow our list of personal rights we get angry. This anger is sinful.

What does this kind of anger do? Look at the next verse: "Neither give place to the devil."

We give the devil access to our life when we insist on defending our personal rights. When we defend self then we are proclaiming our own self righteousness. We are telling others to follow our rules. We are trying to elevate ourselves above other people and control other people. The end result of this behavior is a lifestyle of practical witchcraft. Anger and wrath are in the same list as witchcraft in Galatians 5:20.

Anger is the emotion we feel when we think we discern injustice. Most of the time, however, what we see is not true injustice. When someone does not follow our list of personal rights it is because they are doing the exact same thing we are doing. They are trying to enforce their list as well. How can they enforce their list and we enforce our list at the same time? We can't. That is why we fight, argue, and kill each other. The other person won't do what we want them to do so we kill them, literally, figuratively, with our words, or with a gun.

Be angry about the right things. Be angry about what God is angry about. But don't let selfish anger enter your heart. Do not let anger be your response when someone violates your personal rights. Train yourself to be sad, or compassionate, and be quick to forgive others. Do not give the devil a chance to build into your heart and your mind an attitude like he has. Do not let yourself go to war with others in your heart. Instead, forgive others, love others, humble yourself.

4:28

A Christian is productive and gives to other people. Before we were in Jesus we lived for self. Sometimes living for self meant we took things which were not ours. This was not just taking physical items such as paper clips or pens, either. We took people's attention away from God. We stole from God's glory and forced other people to pay attention to us instead.

Paul's context here, however, was probably pointing to being a thief of material resources. Instead of taking things from people we are to instead live a productive life. As we work we then learn how to give to the needs of other people. Instead of being a taker we become a giver.

Some people take all the time. It never enters their mind to do for others expecting nothing in return. These are completely selfish and self-motivated in everything they put their hand to.

Christians should no longer live like this. However, just because a man is born again in his spirit he does not automatically know in his mind he should not take but instead give.

Jesus called the devil a thief. He said Satan comes to steal, and to kill, and to destroy but Jesus came to give life to people. The devil is a taker. Jesus is a giver.

Let us follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not follow the devil. Pray that the Lord will give you a hatred of taking and a love for giving to others.

Part of the calling of a Christian is to labor and be productive. We should be ready to meet the needs of other people.

4:29

People tend to confuse "corrupt communication" with saying "negative" words. Something might seem to be negative on the surface but can actually be edifying and give grace. I know in my life I've experienced correction which did not feel good when I heard it. Sometimes an exhortation, or correction may almost seem negative, but if we will humble ourselves then it becomes grace to us. It builds us up in our faith. I learned this as a young Christian listening to audio cassette tapes from Times Square Church. David Wilkerson could preach messages that seemed very dark and negative, but I learned it was really good for building up the church and ministering grace to those who listened.

Corrupt communication, therefore, is not just negative words. Today's church people are very confused about the whole concept of positive and negative words. This doctrine of devils, as far as I know, came through charismatic churches which embraced the prosperity gospel. The roots of it go way back into pagan New Age thinking and philosophy which put on a Christian outer coat.

Corrupt communication is more than cussing. When I was a young Christian and read this verse I would make goals to quit cussing. But corrupt communication is much more than just swearing.

Here are some more verses that touch on speech: Ephesians 5:3-4; Colossians 3:8; Colossians 4:6; James 3:5-6; Psalm 19:14.

4:30-32

Here are more things to put off and to put on. This is the pattern we see starting back in verses 22-24. We need to put off the old man. We need to put on the new man. This is not possible without an attitude of humility and a willingness to change, to be corrected, and to be exposed by the light of God's truth. If you are easily offended you won't be able to put on much of the new man. If you get your feelings hurt a lot then it will be more difficult to put off the old man and put on the new man. This is not an easy process. Jesus never said it would be easy. Jesus compared this process to taking up a cross and denying yourself. He clearly showed us this is a journey of loss but what we gain is eternal. We are only losing what is temporary and transient but we are gaining what is eternal and permanent.

The Holy Spirit is God's seal on our lives. The seal points to a specific time in the future which Paul called "the day of redemption". This is when the Lord Jesus returns. This is when we are raised up and receive eternal bodies. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

What do we need to put off? We need to put off bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, and malice. Instead, we need to put on kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness. If you are walking in bitterness then admit it, see it, repent of it, get rid of it. Replace bitterness with forgiveness. Do you have wrath and anger? Admit it. Repent of it. Replace it with kindness and tenderness. This is work. This does not come natural. The work is to believe the gospel, trust in the Lord, humble yourself, confess to God where you fail and the Lord will help you. He created this new man in us but we must agree with the work of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to agree with him, to confess, to humble ourselves. The Lord will do his work in us. He is changing us into the image of Jesus. (Romans 8:29).

A Glorious Church – Ephesians 5

5:1-2

A Christian is to be like Christ. How is Christ? The greatest demonstration of who God is and who the Lord Jesus is can be seen by looking at Calvary. The Lord Jesus Christ gave his life to rescue us, redeem us, and to provide forgiveness for our sins.

In the same way the Lord Jesus loved us we are to love one another. This means we lay down our lives for one another. We give up living for self and instead live for others, especially for those who are in the body of Christ.

The Lord Jesus gave himself as an offering and sacrifice to God. Why did he do this? Because, as the prophet John the Baptist said, the Lord Jesus was the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world. Christ died for our sins, according to the scripture, he was buried, and he was rose again on the third day.

The apostle John saw the Lamb of God in heaven. Read Revelation 5:5-6.

Jesus often told his disciples about his mission to give his life. He told them he would die on the cross, be buried, and rise again the third day. Peter tried to talk the Lord out of this but the Lord rebuked the devil in the mouth of Peter. If we do not have in our mind the things of God then the enemy can deceive Christians into promoting an agenda that is against God's plan. We should remember this and continue to put off the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man daily. We need every day to be renewed in our mind and put on the mind of Christ. A passive or empty mind is vulnerable to deception and attack from the enemy.

Our purpose is to lay down our lives even as Christ gave himself. Our mission is to intercede for others and give our life to helping others be reconciled to God through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

5:3-4

A Christian moves towards purity of heart and mind. He is to be clean, pure, and holy for the Lord. If there is a problem with sexual immorality we need to go directly to God's throne of grace and find help. Receive forgiveness, cleansing, and pray for deliverance.

Like Jacob we learn we can no longer live independently of the Lord but must be governed as Israel. We live one day at a time, relying upon God's grace in our weakness, trusting on God's provision of grace to enable us to overcome temptation to sin.

Sexual immorality is a plague on society today. I think every Christian who lives today is like Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. We live in a day of such extreme perversion that our soul is vexed. There is really no where to run and hide in today's world.

We can run to Jesus and abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Don't make excuses for moral failures. Go to the Lord, confess, repent, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. Acknowledge you are wrong and God is right.

Paul said we should not even let these sins be named among us. Don't make light of these sins. Don't joke around about sodomites and this perverse society we are surrounded with. Don't make jokes and take these sins lightly. We need to weep and mourn before the Lord for the perversion we are surrounded by in this country and in our world.

Instead of joking about sin we need to thank God for forgiveness in the Lamb of God. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. He gave his life so we could be forgiven and delivered. There was a terrible price paid so our sins could be washed away.

Never joke about sin. It leads people to hellfire and damnation every single day. Every day there are people dying in their sins and falling into a pit of darkness from which they will never escape. This is not the time to joke and make light of sin. It is time to mourn, it is time weep, it is time to humble ourselves before the Lord.

May God open our eyes so we can hate sin like he does. May the Lord give us the fear of God so we can depart from all evil.

5:5

Paul stated a fact everyone knows in their conscience. No one who persists in living a life of sin inherits God's kingdom. A person who refuses to acknowledge their sins will not have any part of God's future program and plan.

Paul lists three specific sins here: whore monger, unclean person, and covetous man.

This list includes any person who is immoral, impure, or who lusts after things more than they worship God. This verse should cause each one of us to pause and examine our hearts. We should examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. Have we gone after immorality or lusted after things? Are we in pursuit of money or in pursuit of the Lord? Are we pursuing immorality or is our heart longing for holiness and purity?

If the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts we will hunger for holiness. We will not be covetous because it will be plain to us how temporary are the pleasures of sin. The pleasures of sin are only for a short season and will cause us to go further away from the Lord. We will not live like this for long if the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. We cannot live like this. The Holy Spirit will not allow anyone who belongs to him to sin and live an immoral life.

Falling into sin is one thing. Being overcome momentarily is one thing. But to continuously live in state where your mind is controlled by sexual immorality where you meditate on lust or continuously covet things? You cannot live like this and live for the Lord. These are two different paths of life. One path leads to death. The path of the Lord leads away from sexual immorality and covetousness.

Paul made a statement of fact. Those who live in a state of sexual immorality and coveting cannot receive an inheritance in God's kingdom.

As a Christian our goal is to receive our inheritance in eternity. Our goal is not to live for this present, temporary time. This present age and world system are passing away. We are no longer living for self and for this world system. Instead, our heart should be set on what will last forever. Our inheritance is not what this world offers, but instead our inheritance is in the Lord. The Lord is our reward. Read Genesis 15:1.

5:6-10

Vain words? What would be vain words? Vain words, in this context, are when anyone tells you a Christian can have a lifestyle of covetousness or sexual immorality.

Mega-church preachers promote this all the time. There are so-called pastors in America with thousands of people coming to their churches who promote a message of covetousness and self-worship. They endorse immorality because they never preach against sin. Preaching against sin or condemning sin would be considered "negative" by these preachers. Their entire philosophy is anti-Paul and anti-gospel.

Paul warned us not be deceived by vain words. When people are covetous and have a lifestyle of sexual immorality they prove they are children of disobedience and are under God's wrath.

We are commanded not to be partakers with these people. How are you a partaker with them? Follow a celebrity on Twitter. Congratulations, you are now a partaker with the children of disobedience and in direct disobedience to what the Holy Spirit commands us in this verse.

We are no longer part of the darkness of this world system. We should not follow ungodly entertainers and Hollywood. If you are following these people on Facebook or Twitter you are promoting the works of darkness.

We are light in the Lord. We are to walk as children of the light. We are no longer part of those who live in darkness. We cannot follow them, promote them, and live like them any longer.

Now our goal is to find out what is acceptable to the Lord. We are to put into practice what the Bible teaches us is God's will and God's way for us to live. We cannot live like the world system and expect to receive an inheritance in God's kingdom.

5:11-13

Jesus said his disciples were the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Light exposes darkness. Men do not want the light from Christians because it exposes their evil deeds. It exposes the hypocrisy of unbelievers. Why do unbelievers attack Christians by calling them "hypocrites in that church". I suspect because they know they are the hypocrites. They are made in the image of God but refuse to reflect the God who created them. Instead, they seek darkness and shadows so their evil deeds are not be exposed.

Why would a Christian desire fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Scripture commands Christians to not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them. We should let our light shine for Jesus.

Fellowship means agreement. We cannot agree with unbelievers. We are tempted to agree with them because we were once among them. We may sympathize with the darkness unbelievers live in. We have compassion. Therein lies the temptation to get too close. Our human love is not disciplined in the truth enough so we can show God's love by speaking the truth. Instead, we try to relate to unbelievers on a human level. We do not realize by making agreements we lose our power to win them to Christ.

I have seen Christians develop intimate relationships with unbelievers. They kept saying it was to win the unbeliever to Christ. However, it soon became apparent they would not win them to Christ but instead the unbeliever caused them to backslide on God.

When we reprove people it doesn't mean we are rude. We speak the truth in love. We are gentle and kind to people, showing compassion, but we need to be disciplined and uncompromising. We cannot compromise the truth of God's word.

Fellowship and agreement? People make agreements for personal benefit. When we get into financial agreement with unbelievers we forfeit our ability to be light to them. We are putting our own interests before God's interests. Unbelievers will hold you to whatever agreement you make. They use your debt to excuse their guilty conscience. Do not rely on unbelievers to get needs met. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and God will supply your needs. God is our provider. He is our protector. He is our portion.

Another example is romantic involvement with an unbeliever. This is deadly for both the Christian and the unbeliever. We cannot win unbelievers to Christ by having a romantic relationship with them. When we develop intimate emotional relationships with unbelievers we become one with them.

The Holy Spirit will not be one with darkness. You lose your power to live for Jesus if you have fellowship like this with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14. Being yoked with someone means you agree with them. You agree with them through emotional attachment and intimacy or by verbally agreeing with what they say.

A Christian should not get into a "conversation" like this with unbelievers. Instead, we are called to speak the truth in love. We are called to reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. Reprove means to correct. It means to expose the darkness with the light of God's word which we have in our heart. Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and Psalm 37:30-31.

5:14-17

Those dead in sin are asleep. They think they are awake but they are asleep at the wheel of their lives. Life is passing them by and they cannot understand or see it or understand it.

Scripture commands us to awake from this sleep of death and to get up out of the grave of unbelief. The Lord will give us light for living.

The Lord gives light, wisdom, understanding and everything we need to live for him in this world. By faith we are raised to life with the Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ we pass from death to life. We receive life and light so we can truly live. The devil brings death but Jesus gives abundant life.

As those who are in the light we need to live carefully. We need to think carefully about decisions in life. We need to live in the light of what we know from scripture and from the Lord. If the Lord speaks to you then walk in the revelation of his word. Don't live like you don't know the truth. Live in agreement with the truth you know.

Be careful how you spend your life. Use your time in this life to invest in what is eternal. I have always prayed since I was a young Christian that I could invest my time and energy into what would count for eternity. What will count in eternity? God's word and the souls of men. I pray the Lord would use me to proclaim his word and to bring many people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to be good stewards of the time we have because the days truly are evil. The world will suck the life out of you. If you are not careful you won't have anything left to give to the Lord. You can spend your entire life just providing for self, protecting self, and worshiping self.

When will we begin to put into practice what the Bible says? When will we begin to help others and serve others? When will we begin to lay down our lives for the sake of the gospel?

Pray that you can take hold on what Christ took hold on you for. Pray that you can know God's will for your life. Pray that you can walk in his will for your life. It takes faith and it takes courage and it takes endurance to do this.

I have failed many times to persevere. I gave up at crucial moments in my life. If I had only persevered things would have gotten better and I would be in a much different place today.

It is time to believe God's word. It is time to trust the Lord. It is time to believe, to trust in him, and to stand on his promises. It is time to be still and see the salvation of the Lord.

I have no power, I have no plan, but my eyes are on you, Lord Jesus.

5:18-20

What does someone filled with the Spirit act like? They speak to themselves in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. They sing and make melody in their heart to the Lord. They have a habit of always giving thanks to God for all things.

Here we are commanded to not be drunk with wine. This is so clear it is hard for me to comprehend how Christians can justify drinking alcohol. How much alcohol can you drink before you are drunk? Why take the chance of getting drunk?

When Christians drink alcohol they show by their actions they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They love to feel good more than they love to worship God.

They might be born again but their minds are overthrown by the lies of the devil and the world system.

An overcoming Christian will not drink alcohol. A backsliding Christian and a compromising Christian drinks alcohol. It is a bad witness. It is a bad testimony and it grieves the Holy Spirit when a Christian drinks alcohol.

I'm speaking the truth in love. It is plain but this is a severe problem in the lives of many people. It was a bad problem in my life and has at times been a temptation. We must say no to this temptation and say yes to Jesus.

Instead of being drunk on wine instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. Alcohol cannot provide the peace and joy in life which the Holy Spirit can give.

It is a good idea to learn as many praise and worship songs as you can. It is good to sing praises to the Lord, and not just when you are in church. Memorize hymns. Learn the great old hymns and sing them to yourself and God. This is a great way to keep your heart fixed on the Lord Jesus throughout the day.

Get into the habit of giving thanks in all things. This shows we have faith in the power and control of God over our life. Nothing in our life happens without God's permission. If the Lord allows it then we can endure and give thanks to him in the middle of it. Sometimes we may have to endure an experience like Job but God will be with us in the fiery trial. Keep singing the songs of praise, keep giving thanks, and you will come out on the other side. The Lord is faithful. He will carry on to completion the good work he started in your life.

5:21-24

Submission to authority is a basic Christian teaching for every disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is actually impossible to be a disciple of Jesus and a follower of God and not submit to authority. This is truly basic Christian living. Paul taught here about wives submitting to their husbands, but he also said "submitting yourself one to another in the fear of God". There is a mutual submission in marriage but there is a specific role of the wife which Paul taught here. The husband was the leader in marriage. Just as Christ is the leader of the church. Paul drew a comparison between the marriage relationship and Christ's relationship to the church.

God specifically designed and created each of us to fulfill a role and function. We cannot fill a function for something we were not created for. What we see today with feminism is rebellion against the order and design of God.

A godly woman has an attitude of submission toward God and her husband. Submission is an attitude that all Christians have toward God and also toward our role in family, work, life, country, and the church. Without an attitude of submission then we will go through life thinking we do as we please. This inevitably leads to complete confusion and a feeling of wandering through life. That "lost" feeling comes from rebellion against God's order and God's design. It is only when we submit to how God made us and the universe that we find true joy, peace, and purpose in life.

5:25-33

This scripture is difficult to break down into smaller units because it begins and ends with an exhortation for husbands to love their wives so it is all one section but there is a lot within this section.

The takeaway for me is to love my wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In other words, husbands love their wives and lay down their life for them. They are to love their wives in the same way Jesus loved the church. How did Jesus love the church? He died for her. He gave his life on Calvary to purchase this bride and make her his own.

We see also Paul quoted scripture in Genesis about marriage. He quoted this and also the Lord Jesus Christ quoted this in Genesis. This is an important passage of scripture for us to know, understand, and stand on. This scripture about marriage is more important today when the devil is tearing apart the family. There is so much confusion, propaganda, and lies about men, women, marriage, and the family today. This is why it is important for us to hold on tightly to the truth in God's word about marriage. Marriage is between a man and a woman. This marriage is before God. When a man and a woman are married they become one. They become one flesh.

Paul is pointing to something beyond just marriage in this passage. He pointed to the relationship which the Lord Jesus has with the church. No wonder marriage and the family are attacked by lies and propaganda. Satan wants to distort and destroy marriage and the family because this is a picture which points to the reality of Christ and the church.

Jesus has a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. This is the reality of the situation with the bride of Christ. Within the outward structure of this modern church there is a hidden remnant of believing overcomers who make up the bride. The Lord will bring out this bride in the rapture. He will receive her to himself that where he is she may be also. This is our blessed hope and the destiny of this glorious church without spot or wrinkle.

Spiritual Warfare – Ephesians 6

6:1-4

We can't get any more plain than this. Children, obey your parents. Do this because God said so and it is right. Beyond just obedience children should honor their parents. This is one of the ten commandments which has a promise attached to it. Why honor your parents? So you will live a long life. When the law was first given to Israel if a child did not obey their parents or honor their parents they did not live a long life. The same is true today, as well. Those who rebel against authority, starting with parents, and who dishonor their parents, will more than likely not live a long, full life. Rebellion always bring hardship, pain, and suffering. The way of the transgressor is hard.

Here was an instruction to fathers on raising kids. Fathers were told how to raise kids, whereas there was no instruction to mothers on raising children. Fathers were told not to provoke their children to wrath. I think this means fathers can be hard on children. There is a danger that the child might lose hope and rebel against the father. How can fathers do this? Kids need discipline but they don't need to

be punched in the face or have a branch off a tree broke over their backs. Don't abuse the child. Children need godly discipline but they do not need to have their spirit broken.

Fathers were instructed to train their children in the Lord. This means taking time to teach, to show attention, to listen, to understand their children. It takes time to love children and to bring them up in a nurturing instruction.

I did not have this growing up, but my heavenly Father provided several men who provided godly discipline and instruction for me. I am thankful for those men who became fathers to me when I did not have a father at home. I am thankful the Lord showed me mercy and grace and extended his love towards me through godly men who nurtured and disciplined me.

6:5-9

Servants could also be "slaves". Slavery was common in human history and was common during the period Paul lived in. These servants came to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus and needed instruction on how to live as a Christian. Paul taught them to be obedient and to have an attitude of reverence and respect. Paul taught that by serving their masters they were serving Christ. They served their masters as serving Christ Jesus the Lord. This runs against rebellious human nature which does not want to submit to others. Humans are born with an attitude of rebellion against authority, but especially against any authority that culture says is unacceptable.

Of course, slavery was wrong. But the Bible did not address slavery as a topic. Instead, it taught slaves to live for Christ in the situation they were in.

The principle was to live for the Lord no matter what situation we are in. No matter where we may be we must see our labor as working for the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are a Christian then we are servants of Christ. We are bond-slaves of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Masters were instructed as well. They were forbidden to threaten those which they have authority over. They were taught to remember that their Master was Christ himself and they were to be the same kind of master that the Lord Jesus Christ was.

What kind of master is the Lord Jesus? We are to be the same kind of masters. What kind of servant is the Lord Jesus? We are to be the same kind of servants.

Jesus is all in all.

6:10-11

Only after we know who we are in Christ and have sat down with the Lord in the heavenly places, and only after we are walking in victory, only then can we take our stand against the wiles of the devil.

There is a real enemy for the Christian. This enemy goes through the whole world looking for someone to devour. He is like a lion always on the prowl and looking for victims to take down.

This battle against the enemy never ends while we are on this side of eternity. We must always be on guard against this enemy. How do we prepare? How do we fight?

Paul gave instructions in this final chapter of Ephesians on how to prepare and fight this enemy.

We must be strong in the Lord! How are we strong in the Lord? We do not put any confidence in our ability to fight or overcome or stand. We put our complete faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the work he accomplished at Calvary. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. Our faith is in his finished, completed work.

The way to be strong in the Lord is to hold the gospel and reject all the lies of the world system, religions, and the allure of prestige in the world. We take our stand and overcome by humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. It is by humility we overcome self, sin, the world, and the devil. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. When we humble ourselves before the Lord then he will lift us up.

Our battle is the Lord's battle. He has fought and won this battle on our behalf. Our part is to have faith and stand in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't be moved from the gospel to something else. The world has a lot of alternatives it offers to replace the gospel. There are many religions out there in the world and many systems of philosophy. But the name of Jesus is above all other names. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Paul described the whole armor of God. He used a word picture to describe spiritual things. He used something he saw every day in the Roman world. He looked at the armor the Roman soldiers and thought that would make a good illustration of how the Christian should be prepared spiritually. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. Our battle is against the power of darkness. We also have armor we need to put on every day just like a Roman soldier put on his armor every day.

As far back as I can remember I put on the armor of God while praying. I understand this is a word picture but brought me comfort to think of myself putting on armor every day. Lord, help me to put on the helmet of salvation, the breastplate of righteousness, the belt of truth, the shoes of peace, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

6:12

The Christian battle is not against people but against the powers of darkness behind people. Satan is behind the evil people in the world. These spiritual powers of darkness use men, manipulate and deceive men, and then destroy men. People are not the enemy of the Christian. People are victims of the enemy. We pray for people that their eyes will be opened and so they may know the truth. Instead, we focus our attack on the spiritual problem behind what people do in this world.

This battle is fought through prayer. We stay in God's word, meditate on it, and put it into practice in our daily living. Praying and interceding for people is how we fight against the powers of darkness behind the lives of people.

Realize there is a spiritual battle. The Bible is filled with examples of this spiritual battle taking place. Whether we want to believe it or not this spiritual battle takes place around us every day.

The Bible teaches us that these powers of darkness are in "high places". This means at the top of the political and religious world the powers of darkness are in control. The entire world system is in darkness, and there are powers of darkness in control behind the scenes of these presidents and kings.

Do not put your hope in what man can do. I know many Christians are strong in political involvement, but this is not our primary battle. Our primary battle is in prayer, intercession, and the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is easy to focus on people when there is a problem but consider that this person is not the source of our oppression. The real problem is in the spiritual world where the power of darkness works through people. Remember to have compassion on people and realize they are victims of the enemy. Understanding this set me free from a lot of bitterness when I was a young Christian. I realized that the people who did me harm were instruments of the enemy. They were responsible for their actions but it made it easier for me to forgive when I realized they were victims of the enemy.

Men are in darkness. They do not understand that they are manipulated by evil spirits. Most of the evil men do is in ignorance. I am reminded of how Jesus prayed on the cross. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

6:13-18

Paul exhorted us to put on the full armor of God. The reason we put on the whole armor of God is so we can withstand the evil day and after we did all we could then continue to stand.

The idea of standing our ground is what an army does during a war. They seize ground and then maintain what they take. They maintain that ground by standing on it. They occupy the ground which they win from the enemy. In a similar way we stand upon the ground the Lord Jesus won for us.

Jesus went to the cross, died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. We are to stand on the sacred ground of the finished work of Christ Jesus. We are to firmly reject every alternative to the gospel. The world is filled with pseudo-spiritual alternatives to the gospel. There are step programs, philosophy, and world religions. All these are weapons of the enemy to keep people blinded to the truth of the gospel. Read 2 Corinthians 4:4.

The "god of this world" is none other than the devil. The devil told Jesus that he would offer him all the kingdoms of the world if he would bow down and worship him. The devil has some power over the world system. However, this world system is not what the Lord is after. The Lord Jesus is after another kingdom altogether.

What are the pieces of armor Paul listed for us? The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.

We need to be people of truth. We need to speak the truth, walk in the truth, and live in the truth. We need the Holy Spirit every day to expose darkness or lies in our life and enable us to live in the truth. The truth will endure, but lies will pass away.

All of our righteousness is filthy rags. Read Isaiah 64:6. The righteousness that we need is the righteousness of God. Through what Christ accomplished the Lord imputes to us his righteousness. In order to receive God's righteousness we must surrender our righteousness. This means total surrender of our personal rights. We no longer hold our personal rights. This means we no longer defend ourselves. We trust in God's protection. We trust in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus to defend us from the slander of Satan.

The gospel of peace should guide our footsteps always. We need to walk in the gospel every day. The gospel of peace is that Jesus Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day. This is our peace. There is no peace outside the gospel of Jesus Christ. People have a false peace which the enemy gives people to keep them in bondage to sin. But the peace that God gives cannot be taken away by the world. God's peace surpasses all understanding. Read Philippians 4:7.

Without faith it is impossible to please God because the one who comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. Faith is how we are saved. We have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have faith in what the Lord Jesus accomplished for us. We have faith in the invisible God. We walk by faith and not by sight. This is the life of a Christian. Our life is faith from beginning to end. Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. We must look to him every day and keep on looking to him. This faith is a shield around us. It protects us from the attack of the enemy. When the enemy attacks us with flaming arrows then we can lift up this shield of faith. We can stand on God's promises in his word and extinguish the missiles of the devil.

Finally we have God's word. This is the sword of the Spirit. We need to learn God's word. We must hide God's word in our heart. We need to meditate on God's word day and night. Along with staying in the word, we must also stay in prayer. We must persevere in prayer and stay in the word. These go together. Word and prayer. Prayer and word.

Finally, after we have done all we can then continue to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. The battle belongs to the Lord. He gives us the victory. He made us more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loves us. Nothing can separate us from God's love.

6:19-24

I think it is interesting that the apostle the Lord used to write the majority of the letters in the New Testament requested prayer for himself that he could be bold in his proclamation of the gospel. Paul prayed "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly". I think this is amazing that such a man of God would feel his own weakness in preaching the gospel. This helps me realize that no matter how weak I feel God can still use me if I pray. If we pray and ask God to open the door to serve him and preach the gospel then he will do this.

These are Paul's concluding remarks in his letter to the Ephesians. He closed this letter the same way he usually did by extending grace from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember to pray for those who proclaim the gospel. Let's remember to lift up our pastor, and teachers, and evangelists, and prophets, and apostles. Let us pray for those God who proclaim God's word. There are missionaries who have given their lives to further the gospel in foreign countries. Let's not forget to pray for them. Pray for opportunities in your life to share the gospel.

The Lord can deliver us from the fear of man and give us boldness to share the gospel with people we come in contact with.

Mike Kines

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